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For further information about this booklet contact Charles Hobbs, editor, News Division, Office of Public Affairs, Room 406-A, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250 or call (202) 720-4026.

Statement-

by
MIKE ESPY
SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
October 25, 1993

"REPORT RELEASED BY USDA CRITICIZING SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS"

Today, I want to release the School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study, which I hope will help us spark needed change in our school meal programs.

The meal I just ate was hearty and good -- but I know D.C. schools are working to improve their meal programs. I applaud that effort and I know we all can do better.

Also, today I welcome Senator Leahy, chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee and long-time supporter of improving the school meal programs. As most of you know, Senator Leahy is actively working to improve the programs which we speak about today. His presence here shows a true team effort between both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue.

The release of this report comes at a time when national attention is focused on health issues.

President Clinton has put both children and health at the top of the nation's agenda.

We have done the same at USDA.

Today's report shows -- we must work to cut the amount of fat and sodium in our school meals. We already have started to respond to those criticisms by doubling the amount of fresh fruits and vegetables for the program this year.

Overall, the report shows that 99 percent of our school meal programs fail to meet federal dietary guidelines.

The meals exceed dietary guidelines for fat by 25 percent, saturated fat by 50 percent and sodium by nearly 100 percent.

With the school lunch being the best meal of the day for many of our children, we must do better.

A good school lunch or breakfast -- is just as important as a good school book. You can't get what is in book -- unless you energize the brain.

So the news here is simple: We can't continue to deep fry our children's health.

More than half of USDA's budget goes to programs such as the Food Stamp Program, the National School Lunch Program and a dozen others that provide food to children, the elderly and the needy.

We owe it to the taxpayers who supported the program with \$4.7 billion in FY 1993, to parents concerned about their children's diets, and to the nearly 25 million children who eat a school lunch each day to ensure that the meal served is good for their health.

The Department of Agriculture's role in nutrition is so important that I have announced a reorganization of the Department to make nutrition a priority mission. And I have proposed elevating the position of Assistant Secretary of Food and Consumer Services to an Undersecretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services.

Ellen Haas, the current assistant secretary for Food and Consumer Services -- who is here -- will tell you more about this timely report.

It provides solid, current data about what children eat at school, at home and in between -- and it gives us a good roadmap for change.

It measures the progress we have made in the decade since the last study -- of its kind -- was done. It clearly shows there has been no change.

We have a federal policy on what makes a healthful diet. The SNDA study shows we are not in compliance with our own policy.

Our responsibility is clear.

Our school meal programs must meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and provide all children with healthful, nutritious meals.

Now, if Senator Leahy would like to say a few words.



News Releases-

Release No. 0889.93

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USDA RELEASES REPORT CRITICIZING SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

(ESPY: A GOOD SCHOOL LUNCH OR BREAKFAST IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS A GOOD SCHOOL BOOK)

WASHINGTON, Oct. 25 -- A report criticizing the nation's school lunches and breakfasts, which shows that 99 percent of the schools need to improve the nutrition in their programs, was released today by Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy.

"With the school lunch being one of the most important meals of the day for many of our children, we must do better," said Espy at a news conference in Washington, D.C., at the Brent Elementary School cafeteria. "A good school lunch or breakfast is just as important as a good school book. You can't get what is in the book, unless you energize the mind and the body. So the news here is simple: We can't continue to deep fry our children's health."

The report, called The School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study, surveyed the meals offered in 545 schools and interviewed 3,350 students attending those schools. Overall, more than 25 million children participate in the school lunch and breakfast programs that are offered in more than 90 percent of the schools nationwide.

The report showed that school lunches exceed dietary guidelines for fat by more than 25 percent, saturated fat by 50 percent and sodium by nearly 100 percent. It also found that children who ate the school lunch consumed a significantly higher amount of calories from fat than children who got their lunch elsewhere.

Further, the report showed that virtually no schools conform to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, established in 1980 by the Department of Health and Human Services and USDA.

"Only one percent of schools offered lunches that provide an average of 30 percent or less of calories from fat as recommended by the dietary guidelines," said Ellen Haas, assistant secretary for Food and Consumer Services, who directs the federal nutrition programs. "USDA does not require compliance with the Dietary Guidelines and school meals don't follow the guidelines. We must provide the leadership to meet our national responsibility to children."

Haas added, "There is scientific consensus that diet is linked to health. Diets high in fat and sodium lead to chronic disease such as cancer, heart disease and stroke. And chronic disease often begins in childhood."

Said Espy, "We have a federal policy on what makes a healthful diet. The SNDA study shows we are not in compliance with our own policy. Our responsibility is clear. Our school meal programs must meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and provide all children with healthful, nutritious meals.

"We want to use the results of this major new study to bring change to a program that has been long neglected."

Earlier this year, Espy announced he was moving toward improving the school meal programs by purchasing twice as much fresh fruits and vegetables for this school year and directing Haas to hold a series of four field hearings to gather consensus to make the changes.

The first hearing was held in Atlanta on Oct. 13 with the remainder of the hearings to be held on Oct. 27 in Los Angeles, Nov. 12 in Flint, Mich., and Dec. 7 in Washington, D.C.

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(Copies of the report can be obtained by calling the USDA at 202-720-4623)



Release No. 0890.93
Billy Cox (202) 720-3329

ALGERIA ELIGIBLE FOR MORE MILK POWDER AND BUTTERFAT UNDER THE DAIRY EXPORT INCENTIVE PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, October 25--Under Secretary of Agriculture Eugene Moos today announced that Algeria is eligible for an additional 15,000 metric tons of milk powder and 5,000 metric tons of butterfat under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Dairy Export Incentive Program.

Sales of milk powder and butterfat will be made through normal commercial channels at competitive world prices. Sales will be facilitated through the payment of bonuses of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation.

This allocation will be valid until December 31, as provided in the invitation for offers. Details of the program will be issued in the near future.

For more information call Janet M. Kavan, (202) 720-5540, or L.T. McElvain, (202) 720-6211.



Release No. 0892.93
Brian Haaser (202) 720-6701
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OHIO CORPORATION SENTENCED IN \$6.6 MILLION FOOD STAMP AND WIC CONSPIRACY

WASHINGTON, Oct. 25 -- U.S. Department of Agriculture officials today said a Cleveland corporation has been fined \$60,000 for illegally redeeming millions of dollars worth of food stamps.

"This is one of the largest food stamp trafficking cases ever prosecuted in Ohio," said Charles Gillum, USDA's acting inspector general.

"Officials and others associated with the 6206 Woodland Corporation of Cleveland, which did business as the Woodland Eagle Supermarket, had all been previously sentenced for their role in the illegal redemption of \$6.6 million in food stamp and Women's, Infant's and Children's Program vouchers," Gillum said.

Those previously sentenced include: Amin Salem, owner of Woodland; sentenced to 42 months in federal prison, and fined \$200,000; Sami Salem, his brother and a manager at Woodland; sentenced to 27 months in federal prison and fined \$50,000; Jim Solimon, Woodland's bookkeeper; placed on two months home detention and fined \$1,000; Awni Shuman; placed on three months home detention and fined \$2,000; Abdel Rahman Abuzahriva, and Habbas Habbas, a Woodland employee; both placed on three years probation and fined \$2,000 each.

According to Gillum, Amin Salem, the owner of Woodland was permanently disqualified from participating in the food stamp programs for trafficking in food stamps in 1987. Following Amin Salem's disqualification, Abdel Rahman Abuzahriva falsely represented to USDA's Food and Nutrition Service that he had purchased Woodland from Salem. USDA then authorized Abuzahriva to accept food stamps. Abuzahriva was subsequently permanently disqualified from the food stamp program for trafficking in food stamps. Awni Shuman then falsely represented to FNS he had purchased Woodland from Abuzahriva and was authorized to accept food stamps.

USDA's investigation determined that Amin Salem never actually sold Woodland and that between January 1988 and December 1991, Woodland's food stamp and WIC redemptions exceeded total food sales by more than \$6.6 million. Investigators found that Amin Salem had other stores under his control and had purchased food stamps for cash at less than their face value. Food Stamps may only be used to purchase eligible food items at stores authorized by USDA to participate in the Food Stamp Program.

The charges resulted from a joint investigation conducted by the Office of Inspector General, the Criminal Investigation Division of the Internal Revenue Service, the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the United States Secret Service.

The prosecution was directed by United States Attorney Emily Sweeny, and Assistant United States Attorney Gregory C. Sasse' Northern District of Ohio.



Release No. 0893.93
 Billy Cox (202) 720-3329
 Wayne Baggett (202) 720-2065

USDA ANNOUNCES 1993/94 EXPORT ENHANCEMENT PACKAGE FOR VEGETABLE OIL

WASHINGTON, Oct. 26--The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced a multi-country package of initiatives under the Export Enhancement Program to boost sales of 835,000 metric tons of U.S. vegetable oil.

The new package of vegetable oil initiatives includes 14 countries or regions. The new initiatives will remain in effect through Sept. 30, 1994. Additional destinations or quantities may be added later.

The package of initiatives announced today, in metric tons, includes:

<u>Country or Region</u>	<u>Metric Tons</u>
Algeria	150,000
China	80,000
Dominican Republic	30,000
Egypt 1/	40,000
Former Soviet Union (12)	100,000
Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan	
Hong Kong	20,000
Lebanon	20,000
Mexico	40,000
Morocco	80,000
Norway	25,000
Senegal	20,000
Slovenia	20,000
Tunisia	130,000
<u>Turkey</u>	<u>80,000</u>
Total	835,000

1/First time allocation.

Sales of vegetable oil will be made to buyers in these countries through normal commercial channels at competitive world prices. The export sales will be facilitated with cash bonus payments. The subsidy will enable U.S. exporters to compete at commercial prices in these markets.

EEP Invitations for each of the countries will be issued in the near future. For more information call Randy Baxter, (202) 720-5540, or L.T. McElvain, (202) 720-6211.



Release No. 0895.93
 Laura Trivers (202) 720-7711
 Marci Hilt (202) 720-2156

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HAAS ISSUES STATEMENT ON FRAC REPORT

WASHINGTON, Oct. 26-- Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Food and Consumer Services Ellen Haas today issued the following statement about the findings of the School Breakfast Score Card, a report issued by the Food Research and Action Center on childhood hunger:

"Feeding children is a top priority of this USDA. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy and I are committed to fighting hunger. The National School Meals Programs are our primary line of defense in the fight against childhood hunger.

"The National School Lunch Program serves the midday meal to 25 million children in more than 90 percent of our nation's schools. The National School Breakfast program serves 5 million children a hot meal each morning. Nearly 4.3 million are served free or at a reduced cost.

"The School Breakfast Score Card is right on target -- school breakfast does need to reach more of our nation's children. Almost 60 percent of the schools offering school lunch also serve school breakfast -- but that means 40 percent of the schools do not. USDA wants to meet this challenge. We will work with school districts in every state to make sure that if children need breakfast, they will get it.

"Yesterday afternoon Secretary Espy released a landmark report on the nutritional quality of the meals served to and eaten by school children each day. The School Nutrition Dietary Assessment, a nationally representative study, found that virtually no school meals comply with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. School meals are too high in fat, saturated fat and sodium.

"The National School Meals Program has a responsibility to do more than just serve food. We have a responsibility to the health of our children to serve healthful, nutritious meals -- meals that meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans."



Release No. 0896.93
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SMOKEY BEAR: 50 AND STILL GOING STRONG: America Celebrates Smokey Bear's 50th Anniversary

WASHINGTON, Oct. 26 — Over 50 years ago our national forests were in a crisis and Smokey Bear became a national symbol with his message of "Only YOU Can Prevent Forest Fires.

Smokey Bear's message got through. And today, Smokey Bear is an internationally recognized symbol that is vital to the preservation of one of our nation's most valuable resources - our forests.

To celebrate Smokey Bear's continuing dedication as a protector of our nation's forests, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and communities across the nation have planned hundreds of 50th Anniversary activities from October 1993 through August 9, 1994, Smokey's official birthday.

In announcing the anniversary celebration, Jim Lyons, USDA's Assistant Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment, praised the work of the nation's familiar bear. "For 50 years Smokey Bear has been a guardian of our forests — reminding us of the priceless value of our natural resources — in both urban and rural settings, Smokey has taught us to prevent wildfires and protect our forests.

Americans can watch for special appearances by Smokey Bear at high-visibility national events in the coming year, including the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, Tournament of Roses Parade, Fiesta Bowl Game, and the World Cup Championship in Los Angeles.

"We see the anniversary as a way to reinforce Smokey's message and build our next generation of guardians for America's forests, Lyons said.

During the coming year, Smokey Bear will also make special appearances at schools, community centers, Little League games, rodeos and at a host of other events and activities. The national celebration will culminate in a special day-long celebration on the Mall in Washington, D.C., on August 9, 1994.

Lyons thanked the National Association of State Foresters and The Advertising Council for their continuing cooperation in helping the Forest Service and Smokey deliver his message for 50 years.



USDA EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO MIDWEST TOTALS \$207.4 MILLION

WASHINGTON, Oct. 28--The U.S. Department of Agriculture has provided over \$207.4 million worth of direct disaster assistance to the nine Midwest states affected by rain and floods earlier this year.

Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy said the assistance includes crop disaster payments, crop insurance indemnity payments, emergency food stamps and commodities for group feeding, loans, and Emergency Watershed Protection projects.

The nine states are Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

On Oct. 22, Espy announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture has established an "800" number flood response center for agricultural producers impacted by floods in the Midwest. They can call 1-800-880-4183 to find out what flood-related agricultural assistance is available and where they can get it (USDA release 0887.93).

Espy, who was named coordinator of long-term flood recovery efforts by President Clinton, said recovery from the effects of the flood will take a long time. "The impact of the floods on producers of many areas of the Midwest has been devastating," Espy said. "The payments and other assistance USDA has provided to date are a beginning to the recovery process."

Payments and other financial assistance made by USDA agencies to date in the nine-state area include:

--The Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service made 1993 crop disaster payments of \$75,097,659 to 27,368 producers whose crops were adversely affected by flooding and other severe weather conditions in the Midwest this year. The payments will help those producers who were prevented from planting or who lost some or all of their crops because of excessive moisture and other adverse weather this year, Espy said.

The nine states and the amounts are:

<u>State</u>	<u>Producers Paid</u>	<u>Total Payment</u>
Illinois	2,744	\$8,729,426
Iowa	3,348	9,629,478
Kansas	9,220	16,270,185
Minnesota	458	1,575,751
Missouri	7,099	23,839,177
Nebraska	1,650	4,255,656
North Dakota	24	84,918
South Dakota	2,703	10,447,909
Wisconsin	122	265,159
Total	27,368	\$75,097,659

--The Federal Crop Insurance Corporation has paid \$101,449,129 in indemnities in the nine states for crop losses directly related to the flood.

--The Soil Conservation Service has contracted \$10,694,000 under the Emergency Watershed Protection Program. At least 49 projects have been completed, and another 120 are underway. Projects have included removing debris and sediment from rivers and streams, restoring water control structures that threatened life and property, and establishing vegetative cover on eroded streambanks.

--The Food and Nutrition Service has provided \$9 million in Emergency Food Stamps in Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri. In Illinois, over 5,300 households were certified for \$1.5 million; in Iowa over 6,900 households were certified for \$1.8 million; and in Missouri, over 17,900 households were certified for \$5.6 million. Also, \$1.6 million worth of commodities were provided for group feeding programs of relief organizations like the Red Cross and Salvation Army.

--The Rural Development Administration has obligated \$9,211,700 in business and industry loans from supplemental funding.

--The Farmers Home Administration gives farmers up to eight months after their county is named a disaster area to request Farm Emergency Disaster loans. To date, FmHA has obligated \$385,240 for these loans in the nine-state area.

In addition to payments and other financial assistance, Espy said USDA agencies have also taken the following actions to assist in the flood recovery effort:

Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service

--announced signup for 1993 tree assistance program for commercial tree growers who experienced significant tree losses in 1993 due to damaging weather and related conditions (subject to eligibility restrictions).

In the nine-state area, ASCS:

--gave authority for emergency haying and grazing of the acreage conservation reserve (ACR) and conserving use (CU) acres in 750 counties and 634 counties for the conservation reserve program (CRP);

--qualified 22 counties for the livestock feed program;

--approved 242 counties for the emergency conservation program (ECP) and allocated \$28,366,020 of the \$30,000,000 made available for Midwest flooding.

Federal Crop Insurance Corporation:

--To assist producers who need multiple peril crop insurance coverage for the 1994 crop year, USDA's Federal Crop Insurance Corporation has extended the Sept. 30 sales closing date for barley, wheat (and Group Risk Plan wheat), oats, and rye to Oct. 31.

Soil Conservation Service:

--The Soil Conservation Service is granting variances to landowners who are found out of compliance because they were prevented from staying on schedule with their conservation compliance plans because of the flood.

--Landowners who had not previously participated in USDA programs can receive 1993 emergency benefits if they install a conservation practice in 1993.

--SCS is accelerating wetland determinations so that individuals will know what areas will need protection under provisions of the farm bill.

Farmers Home Administration:

--The Farmers Home Administration makes loans to repair or replace homes in rural areas damaged by flooding. Home repair grants are also available for people over age 62.

--The Farmers Home Administration has taken several steps to help eligible farmers obtain the financial assistance needed in a timely fashion:

- ◆ Temporary changes were made to expedite emergency loan processing. FmHA county offices will be able to complete a Farm and Home Plan at the time the loan is processed.
- ◆ Requirements for completing the Credit and Financial Analysis Work-sheets in addition to the pre-approval review have been waived. If subsequent loan requests are received for the same disaster, county offices can accept an abbreviated form.

Federal Grain Inspection Service

--The Federal Grain Inspection Service has instituted a new testing service for vomitoxins, available on request by grain handlers and other official applicants. The service has also issued a temporary waiver of geographical territories for official agencies for barge sampling along the Mississippi River.

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

--Officials from the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the State of North Dakota, and the Centers for Disease Control are working together to determine an approach for controlling a breakout of the livestock disease anthrax in North Dakota's Sheyenne River Valley.

Cooperative Extension System:

--Cooperative Extension System staff in the flooded states are providing educational programs for farmers, their families, and other flood victims on such topics as: how to access Federal disaster relief programs; bringing flood-damaged cropland back into production; home and farm cleanup, including structural damage; well disinfection; family financial counseling and stress management; food, water, sanitation, and public health issues; job search and resource management skills; and food safety.



Release No. 0900.93

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NUMBER OF CATTLE HERDS QUARANTINED FOR BRUCELLOSIS DROPS BELOW 300

WASHINGTON, Oct. 28 --Only 283 cattle herds were quarantined for brucellosis at the beginning of October, the lowest incidence of this livestock disease since eradication efforts began 60 years ago, a U.S. Department of Agriculture official reported today.

"This is the first time we've dropped below the 300 mark," said Billy G. Johnson, deputy administrator for veterinary services in USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. This achievement is a significant point in the cooperative state-federal program to eradicate this costly disease of cattle.

Brucellosis, a disease that causes abortions and lowered milk production in cows, is transmissible to humans as undulant fever. In humans, the disease causes severe flu-like symptoms that can last for months or years. Humans become infected with brucellosis through contact with carcasses during slaughter or by handling infected cows, particularly at calving time. Humans can also contract brucellosis by consuming unpasteurized milk and dairy products. The Centers for Disease Control this year have reported 65 cases of human brucellosis.

When eradication efforts against brucellosis first started in the early 1930's, five percent of the nation's cattle herds were estimated to be infected. By the late 1950's, nearly 124,000 herds were under quarantine for the disease, said Johnson. By 1980, the number of quarantined herds had been cut to 7,074; by 1985 to 4,533. "In 1990, APHIS, the states and the cattle industry embarked on a Rapid Completion Plan to push the eradication program through its last phase, which is the most challenging part of any disease program," Johnson said. "We've made remarkable progress since then."

In September 1990, brucellosis cases dropped below the 1,000 mark for the first time, with 959 herds under quarantine. This further decreased to 630 by October 1991, to 415 by October 1992 and to 283 at the present time.

Johnson noted that 32 states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are free of bovine brucellosis. Seventeen states are in Class A status, with a herd infection rate of less than 0.25 percent. Texas is the only state with Class B status, having an infection rate up to 1.5 percent.

The goal of the Rapid Completion Plan is to eradicate brucellosis from the United States by October of 1998.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Camera-ready copies of the map and graph are available from Kendra Pratt, USDA, APHIS, Legislative and Public Affairs, Room 613 Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.



Release No. 0901.93

Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623

Tom Amontree (202) 720-4623

USDA ANNOUNCES ACTING CHIEF FOR THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE

Washington, Oct. 28 -- A career Forest Service leader will assume the role as acting chief of the agency Nov. 1, announced Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy.

Dave Unger, 61, currently associate deputy chief for National Forest System will assume the position of chief on an interim basis.

"Mr. Unger has had a distinguished career as a leader in both the Forest Service and the Soil Conservation Service," said Espy. He has the experience and respect of his peers and will serve as an able administrator in helping the Forest Service address the problems and issues now facing the agency."

Unger is a veteran conservationist with a broad professional and organizational background. Most recently, Unger led a national initiative to implement and coordinate efforts to protect endangered fisheries habitat. Before joining the Forest Service in July 1987, Unger served for five years as associate chief of the Soil Conservation Service.

Jim Lyons, assistant secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, said, "Dave Unger's experience in leadership positions with the Soil Conservation Service and the Forest Service at USDA will help accelerate our efforts to foster a closer working relationship between the department's premier natural resource agencies."

Prior to his arrival at USDA, Unger served 14 years with the National Association of Conservation Districts. He was director of the Pennsylvania State Soil and Water Conservation Commission. A fellow of the Soil and Water Conservation Society, Unger also served as chairman of the National Watershed Congress.

A native of Michigan, Unger graduated with a degree in Earth Sciences from Antioch College and holds a master's degree in political science from the University of Pennsylvania and a master's degree in public administration from Harvard University.

Unger succeeds F. Dale Robertson, chief since 1987, who will now serve as special assistant to Deputy Secretary Richard Rominger.

"While I anticipate my new responsibilities will provide a daily challenge, I believe my diverse background at USDA, specifically in the area of natural resources will assist me in my effort to work with the professional core of the Forest Service and help lead the agency in a new direction. It is with a great sense of pride that I accept my new role at the Forest Service," Unger said.

George Leonard who has served as associate chief of the Forest Service since 1987, will also leave his position effective Nov. 1, to assist the assistant secretary for Natural Resources and Environment.



Release No. 0902.93

Bruce Merkle (202) 720-8206

USDA ANNOUNCES FINAL RULES FOR UPLAND COTTON AND CCA USER MARKETING CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, Oct. 28 -- Final rules with respect to the upland cotton coarse count adjustment (CCA) and the user marketing certificate program were announced today by Randy Weber, acting executive vice president of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation.

On August 6, the CCC issued an interim rule to update the list of upland cotton qualities eligible for the CCA (58 FR 41994). On August 12, another interim rule was issued to revise the upland cotton user marketing certificate program relating to the liquidated damages formula and payment rates for U.S. cotton shipped under optional origin contracts (58 FR 42841). Both interim rules allowed 30 days for public comment. No comments were received on either issue. Accordingly, the interim rules are adopted as final rules without change.

A final rule combining these two issues will be published in the Federal Register at a later date.



Release No. 0904.93
Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623

USDA REMINDS PRODUCERS IN MIDWEST FLOOD STATES OF APPROACHING DEADLINES

WASHINGTON, Oct. 28--The U.S. Department of Agriculture today reminded farmers in the Midwest flood area that Monday, Nov. 1, is the final deadline for harvesting hay from Conservation Reserve Program acreage.

Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy extended the CRP hay harvesting deadline up to Nov. 1 in counties where producers were unable to complete haying by the Sept. 30 deadline because of wet weather conditions (USDA release no. 0846.93). Producers had to request an extension of the deadline prior to haying.

On Oct. 22, the USDA reminded producers that the sales closing date is Oct. 31 for regular and group risk plan insurance for wheat, oats, rye and barley (USDA release no. 0886.93). Producers with 1993 crop losses greater than 65 percent of expected production must purchase multiple-peril crop insurance for the 1994 crop to be eligible for 1993 disaster assistance benefits.

Also, producers who previously have not participated in any USDA programs and now want to use emergency programs can become eligible if they agree to develop a conservation plan on their highly erodible land. A conservation practice must be installed by the last day of 1993.

Producers should contact their local Soil Conservation Service or Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service office for further information.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has established an "800" number flood response center for agricultural producers impacted by floods in the Midwest. They can call 1-800-880-4183 to find out what flood-related agricultural assistance is available and where they can get it (USDA release 0887.93).



Release No. 0905.93
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Tom Amontree (202) 720-4623

USDA MOBILIZES FIREFIGHTERS AND SUPPLIES FOR CALIFORNIA

WASHINGTON, Oct. 28--The U.S. Department of Agriculture is sending additional Forest Service firefighters, equipment and an assistant secretary to help state, local and federal emergency efforts already underway in fire-wracked southern California, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy said today.

Espy today dispatched Jim Lyons, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment, to southern California to help oversee the emergency response and provide on the ground support.

"I want to assure the public that this tragic situation has my full attention as we try to end this crisis as quickly as possible," said Espy. "I have sent Jim Lyons to the area to lend support to the federal effort and to ensure all our resources are being utilized effectively and in a responsive manner."

The Forest Service, with the assistance of other agencies, is providing fire engines, airtankers, bulldozers, helicopters, emergency leadership teams, food preparation, sanitation facilities, and supplies. Aircraft dispatched to assist in the fire effort include 26 airtankers, 15 helicopters, and six lead planes.

The Forest Service is also working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide up-to-date information and emergency services to affected individuals during this critical time.

Approximately 143,500 acres of federal, state and private lands have been scorched. Over 16,500 acres on five National Forests have burned. Lands in Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Diego and San Bernardino Counties are affected.

The hot, dry Santa Ana winds, blowing up to 70 miles per hour, have fanned the flames of over 40 fires. Over 15 fires are threatening or burning structures. Over 3000 firefighters are already on the scene from state, county, city and local volunteer fire departments; the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and other federal agencies.



Release No. 0906.93

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USDA WILL EXPEDITE SAFE HANDLING LABELS THROUGH ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS

WASHINGTON, Oct. 29 -- To assure that safe handling information will reach consumers quickly, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has chosen to pursue its safe handling label for meat and poultry products through the administrative process.

This action follows an Oct. 19 ruling by the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit that allowed an injunction to remain in effect on the department's proposed label. The action left in place an Oct. 14 order by a Texas judge in support of a motion for preliminary injunctions brought by a number of food industry groups.

"It is the goal of this administration to assure that consumers receive safe handling information so that families can stay healthy. It's clear that waiting until January to have our case heard and then possibly having to wait several additional months for a final decision is not wise if the ultimate goal is to get safe handling information to consumers as soon as possible," said Mike Espy, Secretary of Agriculture.

Espy said that by proceeding with the label administratively, rather than by continuing to challenge the suit, consumers could conceivably begin seeing safe handling labels before the court would make a final decision on the appeal. The fifth circuit court said they could hear USDA's appeal in January.

"Our original decision to move forward with labels through an expedited rule-making process was based on the urgency of getting information to consumers so they could stay healthy. That is why we have now chosen to act administratively. We believe that we can't afford to wait for months and months for the application of this label," he said.

The Texas judge ruled that USDA had not acted properly by choosing to use an expedited rule-making procedure and that the department had not demonstrated that an emergency existed. In his decision, he stated that he believed the outbreaks of food poisoning attributed to E. Coli occurred primarily in fast food chains and were isolated geographically.

Representatives of USDA argued that illnesses and deaths attributed to E. Coli, as well as other pathogens such as salmonella, have occurred all across the nation and have not been limited to fast food chains. They cited several cases, including a Michigan child who died this summer from eating an undercooked hamburger at a picnic and another child in New York who died after eating an undercooked meatball.

USDA also argued that the plaintiffs who brought the suit were incorrect when they stated that the expedited rule-making proceeding did not give them time to comment. USDA officials said that during the 30-day comment period they received over 350 comments and suggestions, several of which were incorporated into the final safe handling label rule. They also received comments from the plaintiffs.

The plaintiffs who filed the suit are the Texas Food Industry Association, the National American Wholesale Grocers' Association/International Foodservice Distributors Association and the national Grocers Association.

Espy said that during the interim period USDA will proceed with its planned advertising campaign to better inform consumers of safe handling procedures for meat and poultry products. One of the radio advertisements features a parent whose child died as a result of E. Coli contamination.

Espy again applauded those food industry members who have begun affixing the safe handling label voluntarily and encouraged others to do the same.

"We are going to have safe handling labels," Espy said. "I'd rather have them sooner than later. It's good policy and it makes good sense to provide consumers with information to help them stay safe."



Program Announcements-

Releases No. 0894.93
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USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET RICE PRICES, MARKETING CERTIFICATE RATES

WASHINGTON, Oct. 26--Under Secretary of Agriculture Eugene Moos today announced the prevailing world market prices of milled rice, loan rate basis, as follows:

--long grain whole kernels:	8.05 cents per pound
--medium grain whole kernels:	7.32 cents per pound
--short grain whole kernels:	7.25 cents per pound
--broken kernels:	4.02 cents per pound

Based upon these milled rice world market prices, loan deficiency payment (LDP) rates, gains from repaying price support loans at the world market price, and marketing certificate rates are:

	Loan Gain and LDP Rate	Marketing Certificate Rate
\$/Cwt.....	
--for long grain:	\$1.68	\$0.00
--for medium grain:	\$1.52	\$0.00
--for short grain:	\$1.50	\$0.00

These announced prices and rates are effective today at 3 p.m. EDT. The next scheduled price announcement will be made Nov. 2 at 3 p.m. EST.



Release No. 0903.93
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USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET PRICE AND USER MARKETING CERTIFICATE PAYMENT RATE FOR UPLAND COTTON

WASHINGTON, Oct. 28--Grant Buntrock, executive vice president of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation, today announced the prevailing world market price, adjusted to U.S. quality and location (adjusted world price or AWP), for Strict Low Middling (SLM) 1-1/16 inch (leaf grade 4, micronaire 3.5-3.6 and 4.3-4.9, strength 24-25 grams per tex) upland cotton (base quality), and the coarse count adjustment (CCA) in effect from 5:00 p.m. today through 3:59 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 4. The user marketing certificate payment rate announced today is in effect from 12:01 a.m. Friday, Oct. 29, through midnight Thursday, Nov. 4.

The Agricultural Act of 1949, as amended, provides that the AWP may be further adjusted if: (a) the AWP is less than 115 percent of the current crop year loan rate for base quality upland cotton, and (b) the Friday through Thursday average price quotation for the lowest-priced U.S. growth as quoted for Middling (M) 1-3/32 inch cotton, C.I.F. northern Europe (USNE price) exceeds the Northern Europe (NE) price. The maximum allowable adjustment is the difference between the USNE price and the NE price.

A further adjustment to this week's calculated AWP may be made in accordance with this provision. The calculated AWP is 78 percent of the 1993 upland cotton base quality loan rate, and the USNE price exceeds the NE price by 2.06 cents per pound. Following are the relevant calculations:

I.	Calculated AWP	40.76 cents per pound
	1993 Base Loan Rate	52.35 cents per pound
	AWP as a Percent of Loan Rate	78
II.	USNE Price	56.45 cents per pound
	NE Price	- 54.39 cents per pound
	Maximum Adjustment Allowed	2.06 cents per pound

Based on a consideration of the U.S. share of world exports, the current level of cotton export sales and cotton export shipments, and other relevant data, no further adjustment to this week's calculated AWP will be made.

This week's AWP and coarse count adjustment are determined as follows:

Adjusted World Price

NE Price	54.39
Adjustments:	
Avg. U.S. spot market location	11.82
SLM 1-1/16 inch cotton	1.50
Avg. U.S. location	0.31
Sum of Adjustments	- 13.63
Calculated AWP	40.76
Further AWP adjustment	- 0
ADJUSTED WORLD PRICE	40.76 cents/lb.

Coarse Count Adjustment

NE Price	54.39
NE Coarse Count Price	- 50.50
	3.89
Adjustment to SLM 1-1/32 inch cotton	- 3.20
COARSE COUNT ADJUSTMENT	0.69 cents/lb.

Because the AWP is below the 1991, 1992, and 1993 base quality loan rates of 50.77, 52.35, and 52.35 cents per pound, respectively, the loan repayment rate during this period is equal to the AWP, adjusted for the specific quality and location plus applicable interest and storage charges. The AWP will continue to be used to determine the value of upland cotton that is obtained in exchange for commodity certificates.

Because the AWP is below the 1993-crop loan rate, cash loan deficiency payments (LDPs) will be paid to eligible producers who agree to forgo obtaining a price support loan with respect to the 1993 crop. The payment rate is equal to the difference between the loan rate and the AWP. Producers are allowed to obtain an LDP on a bale-by-bale basis.

The USNE price has exceeded the NE price by more than 1.25 cents per pound for four consecutive weeks and the AWP has not exceeded 130 percent of the 1993 crop year base quality loan rate in any week of the 4-week period. As a result, the user marketing certificate payment rate is 0.81 cents per pound. This rate is applicable during the Friday through Thursday period for bales opened by domestic users and for cotton contracts entered into by exporters for delivery prior to Sept. 30, 1994. Relevant data are summarized below:

Week	For the Friday through Thursday Period Ending	USNE Price	NE Price cents/lb	User Marketing Certificate Payment Rate
1	Oct. 7, 1993	57.05	55.21	0.59
2	Oct. 14, 1993	58.20	55.12	1.83
3	Oct. 21, 1993	56.60	54.51	0.84
4	Oct. 28, 1993	56.45	54.39	0.81

Next week's AWP, CCA and user marketing certificate payment rate will be announced on Thursday, Nov. 4.



